



## TEACHER'S GUIDE

Welcome to the ***Bowling For Columbine*** TEACHER'S GUIDE.

The lessons and activities in this GUIDE are designed to help students develop critical thinking skills, historical analysis, and open their minds on many universal issues.

The individual units may easily be adapted to many levels and taught across the curriculum--Social Science, [History, Civics, Psychology, Sociology, Political Science]

Language Arts, [English, Writing, Poetry], Humanities, Drama/Theatre, Film, ESL, Media/Journalism, Speech/Communications...

So, go do that magic we call education! And, be sure to share, share, share!

We would love to hear from you. Send your feedback or ideas to share with other educators to: **[Teacher@michaelmoore.com](mailto:Teacher@michaelmoore.com)**

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# **MOVIE GUIDE FOR BOWLING FOR COLUMBINE**

This GUIDE can be used in various ways:

1. As you watch the film, please make notes about the following questions as well as any other interesting information that you find important in the film. The questions are in the same order as in the film.
  2. If there is little time for class discussion after viewing the film, have students complete this at home for the following day's discussion.
  3. Pull out selected questions for general class discussion.
  4. See also: **General Discussion Questions** and **Essay Topics**.
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1. Michael Moore opens a bank account so that he can get what item instead of interest?
2. Where did Michael Moore grow up?
3. Charlton Heston is president of what organization?
4. Who are Timothy McVeigh and Terry Nichols?
5. Why does the man from the Michigan militia say you must carry a gun?
6. James Nichols was arrested in connection with what bombing?
7. James Nichols says, "I use the pen, because the pen is mightier than the sword. But you always have to keep the sword handy for when the pen fails." What does this statement mean?
8. Does James Nichols believe that nuclear weapons should be restricted? Does he contradict himself?
9. Describe the Littleton community.

10. The security expert in Littleton talks with Michael Moore about security in houses. What is a safe room? Why would you want one?
11. This security man gets emotional and says that Columbine “did” something. What did Columbine do?
12. What does Lockheed mean by “We are Columbine”?
13. Why did Lockheed donate \$100,000 toward anger-management programs?
14. What happened in Kosovo on April 20, 1999? What happened one hour later?
15. What organization held a major rally in Denver 10 days after the shooting?
16. How did Matt Stone and Trey Parker choose to respond to life in Littleton?
17. What were some of the responses from schools nationwide to the tragedy at Columbine?
18. Who were some of the people/things blamed for the tragedy at Columbine?
19. How does Marilyn Manson respond to allegations that he is to blame? Who does he imply was influential?
20. What class were the boys enrolled in the morning before they killed at Columbine?
21. What other countries besides ours have violent pasts?
22. When was the Colt revolver created?
23. When was the NRA founded?
24. What does the news media want people to feel?

25. How many kids have been killed by Halloween candy? Was it on purpose?
26. Who is the most common suspect on television?
27. Who most often gets in trouble for gun possession—kids in the city or kids in the suburbs?
28. Who conditions people in the United States to believe that their communities are dangerous?
29. What does the former TV producer of *Cops* say sells in the media?
30. How many gun murders were there in Sarnia, Canada, in the past three years? How many in Windsor?
31. What are some misconceptions about Canada? What is the truth?
32. Does Canada have guns? In 2001, could they get guns/ ammunition easily? Explain.
33. How is Canadian TV news different from TV news in the United States?
34. How is the health care system in Canada different from health care in the United States?
35. How long did it take the news crews to show up in Flint, Michigan, to cover the youngest school shooting?
36. How did the Welfare to Work program impact Tamarla Owens, the mother of the boy who shot the little girl, Kayla?
37. How did people capitalize on September 11<sup>th</sup>?

38. What does Michael Moore take Richard and Mark to do at K-Mart headquarters?
39. What do Mark, Richard and Michael convince K-Mart to do about selling ammunition in their stores?
40. Whom does Michael Moore visit at his house in Hollywood? What is the outcome of their discussion?
41. What did you learn from the film?
42. What are some of the questions this film poses?
43. After watching this film, what else do you want to know?

# **GETTING STARTED... BEFORE VIEWING THE FILM**

Across The Curriculum

Five general “INTRO” exercises for the film to get the students thinking about the issues before they watch the film:

1. Bring in newspapers and magazines and have the students work in groups to create a collage on violence and the media. Have students do a “gallery walk” (i.e. walk around the room and look at the other students’ collages). Follow up this activity with a discussion of what they see.
2. Students work in groups to brainstorm and create five headlines that might be used for a news show. Have each group write their favorite one on the board. Discuss the results.
3. Students write a one-page “freewrite” in which they discuss one or all of the following prompts:
  - How does media impact our daily lives? Give specific examples.
  - Discuss your views about violence in the United States compared to violence in other countries.
  - What or who creates violent individuals? Who is responsible when a child or young adult commits a crime?
  - What do you fear in our society and why? What do you think causes your fears?
  - Where do you stand on gun ownership and gun control issues? Be specific.

After they write, have the students share some of their ideas with the class.

4. Create a “found poem” in groups based on the headlines of newspapers and news magazines the teacher brings to class (see “found poetry” handout) and have the students present their found poems to the class.
5. Short research “into”: If you have access to the Internet, have the students break into five groups and research the following topics online for 20 minutes and then report the information they discovered back to the class:
  - Media conglomerates
  - Lockheed Martin Corporation
  - Welfare reform/welfare-to-work
  - Gun control laws/The Brady Campaign/Million Mom March/Firearms Law Center

- National Rifle Association
- The 2<sup>nd</sup> amendment to the U.S. Constitution
- The Columbine shootings
- The concept of “consumerism”
- Social safety net
- Poverty
- Racism
- Killer bees
- Shah of Iran
- Salvador Allende
- Militias
- Y2K scare
- Vietnam war
- The concept of “military-industrial complex”

## FOUND POETRY

### An Editing Activity

The task is to capture the **Essence** of a story, chapter, passage, character, etc., by drastically editing the text. You must adhere to the following guidelines:

1. Select several phrases (groups of words) from the text.
  - Each phrase must be at least 3 words long, but no phrase should be more than 10 words long.
2. The phrases you select should then be used to create a poem of at least 10-15 lines.
  - You may combine phrases into one line of your poem, but remember that no line in your poem should be more than 10 words long.
  - Remember that it is easier to create a strong found poem if you have several phrases to choose from rather than just finding the minimum number of lines you need for the activity.
3. You may use the phrases in any way you like – for example, you may repeat words or clusters of words throughout your poem.
4. You may **not** change the order of the words in the original text.
5. You may **not** add any words of your own. All the words in your poem have to come from the text.
6. You may leave words out of the phrases you select to create a more poetic feel/sound to your poem.



## IF YOU ARE BEING ASKED TO PRESENT YOUR FOUND POEM...

- Decide how you will present it – remember that a reader can have a strong impact on the meaning of a poem.
- If it's a group exercise, everyone must be involved in the presentation.
- You can use single voices or a choral reading.
- Consider your positioning in the space.
- Consider body positions and gestures.
- Or dance/movement.
- Combinations of the above.

# GENERAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS ESSAY TOPICS

All Subjects

1. What issues and themes does the film present?
2. What questions about the United States are raised in the film?
3. Why is it important to examine U.S. history when asking these complex questions?
4. What additional information would be helpful when seeking solutions to problems presented in the film?
5. Brainstorm examples of short-term solutions vs. long-term solutions.
6. Long-term solutions are more complex and difficult to address and require a greater commitment. What are some policies the U.S. government and others will need to change to make a more peaceful and just world for future generations?
7. Michael Moore asks the Lockheed manager if kids think, "Dad goes off to the factory every day and builds missiles. These are weapons of mass destruction. What's the difference between that mass destruction and the mass destruction over at Columbine High School?" The Lockheed manager suggests that there is not a connection. In a persuasive essay, support a thesis in which you argue whether Moore's statement of a connection makes sense.
8. Define satire. Name a well-known historical figure that has used satire to make a political point. How does the film use political satire to make a point? (Describe some examples.)
9. Is it your responsibility as an American to support gun rights or have modern weaponry and living conditions made the Second Amendment obsolete?

Things to consider:

- What was the population of the United States when the Second Amendment was drafted and how did most Americans live?
  - Compare this life to the current living conditions (both urban and rural) of the United States.
  - What dangers (personal and social) did people face then compared to now?
  - Consider the language of the Second Amendment. Do you think it refers to the *individual* right to possess guns or to the *collective* right of the people?
10. An underlying theme in the film is the issue of white racism and how this racism has spawned fear. Using specific examples from the film as well as

other research, agree or disagree with the concept that racism in our country leads to fear.

11. When young people commit violent acts, who and/or what is to blame?
12. What are the rights to gun ownership in other countries (e.g. Canada, Great Britain, Japan, Australia, France, Germany, etc.), and how do these laws compare to our own laws?
13. In our democratic society, what is the media's responsibility to the American public?
14. Does the media play on our fears or create new messages? Why/why not?
15. Take a position and support it: Do you believe the U.S. media is reliably reporting what is happening around the world?
16. Consider all the shots and scenes with bowling pins. What do you think they could symbolize and why?
17. Moore uses various editing styles throughout the film (dramatic, humorous, shocking, satirical, etc.) to convey his messages. Describe and explain as many of them as you can. What point is the filmmaker trying to make? How/why are these effective or not in your view?
18. According to filmmaker Michael Moore, the number of household guns in a country does not necessarily equate the degree of gun violence in that country. If it's not the number of guns, what factors do contribute to the violent nature of a society?
19. Other than the gun violence, what other forms of violence does Moore point to in the film? Moore has stated that sometimes governmental acts, such as Michigan's Welfare to Work program, amount to state-sponsored acts of violence on the poor. What do you think he means by this? (See also lesson plan: **Whose Terrorism?** to explore a broader definition of terrorism and violence.)
20. How does Moore use the soundtrack to convey his messages? What song would you select to convey the overall feel of this film?

# RESEARCH TOPICS

## VARIOUS APPLICATIONS

- Have students do research on the topics below. This exercise will provide a greater understanding of the film and its issues.
- Have students work in pairs or small groups to research some or all of the following topics before (or after) watching the movie. Each group will become experts on one area and report back to the class. (In some cases you may choose only to give them the general topic and not the extra information about the casualties.)
- If possible, have them research online so they can find multiple sources. After finishing the research, have them present the information to the class with or without a visual aid (e.g., maps, timelines, statistical charts, key names, photo essay, list of sources). It may also be helpful to give students a minimum and maximum time frame they must work in.
- Use lessons “What is terrorism? Who are the terrorists?” and “Whose terrorism?” Have students define “terrorism.”
- After viewing the film, have students write brief factual scenarios for numbers 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 7 and 11 below, substituting alternate names for the countries involved (see: “Whose Terrorism?” lesson plan for examples). When groups are ready, exchange scenarios with other groups and have students answer these questions:
  1. Which, if any, of these activities should be considered “terrorism” according to your definition of terrorism? (See “What is terrorism? Who are the terrorists?”)
  2. Who are the “terrorists”?
  3. What more would you need to know to be more sure of your answer?

These exercises also provide an opportunity for students to practice their research and speaking skills.

Helpful resources can be found at: [www.michaelmoore.com](http://www.michaelmoore.com) and [www.BowlingforColumbine.com](http://www.BowlingforColumbine.com).

## RESEARCH EXPERT PROJECT

These following topics are from the film *Bowling for Columbine*:

1. 1953: U.S. overthrows Prime Minister Mossadegh of Iran. U.S. installs the Shah as dictator.
2. 1954: U.S. overthrows democratically elected President Arbenz of Guatemala. 20,000 civilians are killed.
3. 1963: U.S. backs assassination of South Vietnamese President Diem.
4. 1963-1975: U.S. military kills 4 million people in Southeast Asia.
5. September 11, 1973: U.S. stages a military coup in Chile. Democratically elected president Salvador Allende is assassinated. Dictator Gen. Augusto Pinochet is installed. 5,000 Chileans are murdered.
6. 1977: U.S. backs military rulers of El Salvador. 7,000 Salvadorans and four American nuns are killed.
7. 1980s: U.S. trains Osama bin Laden and fellow Muslim terrorists to kill Soviets. CIA gives them \$3 billion.
8. 1981: Reagan administration trains and funds "Contras" to fight government.  
30,000 Nicaraguans die.
9. 1982: U.S. provides billions in aid to Saddam Hussein for weapons to kill Iranians.
10. 1983: The White House secretly gives Iran weapons to kill Iraqis.
11. 1989: CIA agent Manuel Noriega (also serving as president of Panama) disobeys orders from Washington. U.S. invades Panama and removes Noriega.
12. 1990: Iraq invades Kuwait with weapons from U.S.
13. 1991: U.S. enters Iraq. Bush reinstates dictator of Kuwait.
14. 1998: U.S. bombs "weapons factory" in Sudan. The factory turns out to be making aspirin.
15. 1991-making of the film: U.S. planes bomb Iraq on a weekly basis. The United Nations estimates that 500,000 Iraqi children die from bombing and sanctions.
16. 2000-2001: U.S. gives Taliban-ruled Afghanistan \$245 million in "aid."

# **SELF-SELECTED VOCABULARY: BOWLING FOR COLUMBINE**

Across The Curriculum

A good vocabulary is something that learners should seek and strive to master. Studies have shown that a strong vocabulary comes from wanting to have a strong vocabulary and taking steps to inquire about words heard or read. Thus, a good vocabulary is achieved through challenging reading and attentive listening – and then looking words up and making them part of a daily vocabulary.

Vocabulary words are EVERYWHERE! Below are 10 words that you will hear in the movie *Bowling for Columbine*. First, look up these words to find their definitions. Next, create your own list of ten words that you hear and/or read in your world: in books you read, in TV shows or movies you watch, and in the conversational air around you. Be active. When you hear a new word, write it down and look it up later. Choose words that you find challenging and interesting. Remember, you may recognize the word but not know what it really means, so use this as a chance to get a solid understanding of words you hear every day as well as a way to explore less common words that you read or hear.

Make a list of these words. For each word perform the following three steps:

1. Write the word and the definition of the word used in that context. Some words have multiple definitions. You want to write the definition for the context in which you found the word.
2. Write the context – part of the sentence in which you found the word or the way it was used in an expression.
3. Include the source in which you found it (i.e., novel (include page numbers), movie, TV show, etc.)

Example:

1. Swarthinness: Dark in color or complexion
2. "When Roger opened his eyes and saw him, a darker shadow crept beneath the swarthinness of his skin..."
3. *Lord of the Flies*, page 57

## ***BOWLING FOR COLUMBINE VOCABULARY***

1. adjudicate
2. militia
3. microcosm
4. coup
5. sanctions
6. persecuted

7. predominantly
8. indigent
9. radical
10. consumption

# CREATIVE WRITING RESPONSE PROJECT

As a creative writing response to the film, students will create **5-10 pages of polished**, workshopped creative writing and bind them together as books that can be presented in the library as literary responses to Michael Moore's film *Bowling for Columbine*. In a portfolio each student will create any of the following options or combination of options.

- A series of 5-7 poems (These poems could focus on a theme from the movie such as fear or touch on a number of different themes.)
- A short story based on or inspired by the movie
- A series of vignettes inspired by the movie
- A stage play inspired by the movie
- A screenplay inspired by the movie
- A "rant" or a series of "rants" or other creative non-fiction pieces inspired by the movie

The portfolio must also include 5 appropriate internal illustrations and a cover page with an illustration. The illustrations can be drawings, collages, computer graphics, photographs, etc. The illustrations must act as an enhancement of the writing (make sure they are thematically appropriate to the writing and not just random).

At the end of the unit, the class will do a reading in which each student presents 30 seconds to one minute of their work to the class.

## WRITER'S WORKSHOP

At least one day of the unit should be a writer's workshop. In groups of 3-4, students read their rough drafts to each other and get feedback on mechanics, style and content. The following sentence starters can be written on the board or turned into a worksheet that the students complete for each other during the workshop:

- As a response to *Bowling for Columbine*, the student author chose to write...
- The best part of this creative writing is...
- The place where I thought the author could most improve his/her writing is...
- The author best captured the essence of *Bowling for Columbine* when...
- My favorite three lines of this writer's work are...



## **A SOCRATIC SEMINAR APPROACH TO BOWLING FOR COLUMBINE**

This activity can be designed in two shorter periods or be used during one block period. While the teacher does get the seminar organized, the seminar itself is entirely student-driven. During the actual seminar, the teacher should sit outside the circle of responders and not interject.

- Have students generate at least 3 discussion questions each about the film.
- In groups of 3-4, have the students choose the best 2-3 questions from their group. As a class, generate a list of 21-30 questions and write these on the board or on an overhead.
- Divide the questions into 3 groups of 7-10.
- Divide the class into three groups and give each group a list of 7-10 questions. Students should write down their list of questions.
- Each student should brainstorm/freewrite about the assigned questions. This can be given as homework or during a 10-minute silent time in class.
- Each group gets the opportunity to act as responders and discuss their questions for 15 minutes. The group should sit in a circle where the other students in the class can observe them and take notes on points raised that they find important. Before this happens, the teacher should designate a student seminar leader. This person's role is to keep the students focused, make sure all the questions get addressed during the time allowed and everyone gets a chance to respond. This person is welcome to add his/her opinion at times but is primarily there to act as a facilitator.

Depending on how much time you give the students to discuss, this seminar can count as a quiz and the teacher can score their participation with the following rubric.

	Excellent	Average	Poor
Respondent's depth of commentary	Clear understanding of and strong insight into the questions. Responds appropriately to other comments.	Basic understanding / insight, but could expand on ideas. Usually responds well but at times gets away from the topic.	Responds little if at all to the questions. Comments imply that respondent is ignoring what's being said by others.
Respondent's commitment to the exercise	Propels the discussion forward in a meaningful way. Engaged with and listens to others.	Helps at times with the process but doesn't always seem to be listening to others.	Distracted and unfocused during the process. Clearly not listening to others.

# **ANALYTICAL PARAGRAPH WRITING USING SONG LYRICS AND BOWLING FOR COLUMBINE**

The goal of this lesson is to build analytical writing skills with a structured paragraph format using the film and the students' own selected song.

- Students select a theme from the film and then select a song that they feel thematically connects to the film *Bowling for Columbine*.
- Students bring in the typed lyrics of their song (editing out inappropriate language).
- Following the paragraph format shown below, the students write an analytical response that thematically compares their song to the film through specific examples from the song lyrics and the film.
- The students should title their paragraph with the theme they selected.
- Write a paragraph together as a class first before sending the students home to work on their own analytical paragraph.

Analytical Paragraph Structure (Each English department might call each part of the paragraph a different name than the ones listed below; please use the names the students in your department are used to using.)

- TOPIC SENTENCE (introduce the theme)
- SPECIFIC STATEMENT #1 (introducing the evidence from the film and the song)
- TEXT EVIDENCE #1 (a paraphrase from the film connecting to lyrics from the song)
- ANALYSIS (2-3 sentences analyzing the thematic connection – proving the point)
- TRANSITION WORD OR PHRASE (Another example, or however, or Also)
- SPECIFIC STATEMENT #2 (introducing the evidence from the film and the song)
- TEXT EVIDENCE #2 (a paraphrase from the film connecting to lyrics from the song)
- ANALYSIS (2-3 sentences analyzing the thematic connection – proving the point)
- CLOSING SENTENCE (bring closure to the thematic topic)

The students should bring in a rough draft of their paragraph and go through a peer editing process of their paragraphs in groups of 3-4 before turning in the final typed version of their paragraph.

# POETRY

## WRITE A POEM USING ONE OF THE FILM'S THEMES

- America's culture of violence, culture of fear, policies that beat up on the poor,
- Race discrimination/ racial profiling, use of U.S. military force around the globe,
- U.S. gun violence, the media frenzy around violence, power politics of the NRA,
- etc.

## GETTING STARTED

- Highlight SCENES FROM THE FILM that create an INTENSELY EMOTIONAL reaction or help the students understand the THEME from a personal point of view.
- Your poem should reflect your emotions and your point of view.
- Explore a point of view, for example:
- Race discrimination/race stereotyping. Write a poem from the point of view of an African-American or another racial minority in the United States.

Poems can take many forms. One suggestion:

- "WE ARE *NOT*....
- "WE ARE ...

Visit this Web site for information about POETS who are speaking out for peace and social justice: <http://poetsagainsthewar.org/>

# **CORPORATE COPS WRITE YOUR OWN EPISODE**

Students work in small groups. Select through research a CORPORATE CRIMINAL to bring to justice. USE OF HUMOR ENCOURAGED!

Students will write an OUTLINE of the story.

Each story must contain three to five facts, backed up with documentation. List facts and cite sources for each. This list of facts and citations is called a "FACT-CHECKING BIBLE."

Students should construct a STORYBOARD\* with each scene. Students will write the narration and SELECT MUSIC to go with each scene.

PRESENTATION TO CLASS: Students can film their Corporate Cops episode on video/mini-DV or act it out.

## **RESOURCES**

### **U.S. GOVERNMENT RESOURCES**

- Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) <http://www.eeoc.gov/>
- Environmental Protection Agency's Envirofacts Data Warehouse (EPA) <http://www.epa.gov/enviro/>
- National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) <http://www.nlr.gov/>
- Occupational Safety and Health Administration Inspection Data (OSHA) <http://www.iccr.org/>
- Securities and Exchange Commission Enforcement Division (SEC) <http://www.sec.gov/divisions/enforce.shtml>

### **CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITY**

- Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility: For nearly thirty years the ICCR has been a leader in researching, campaigning and spearheading shareholder resolutions for denominations and other groups interested in socially responsible investing. <http://www.iccr.org/>
- <http://www.corpwatch.org/research>

### **ENVIRONMENT /TOXICS**

- Natural Resources Defense Council <http://www.nrdc.org>
- Environmental Working Group: <http://www.ewg.org/>
- RTK Net: <http://www.rtknet.org/>

- Pesticide Action Network North America: <http://www.panna.org/>
- Environmental Defense: <http://www.environmentaldefense.org/home.cfm>
- Scorecard: <http://www.scorecard.org/>

#### MILITARY CONTRACTS

- Center for Defense Information: Search by corporation for information on military contracts <http://www.cdi.org/>

#### LABOR

- LaborNet: Information on labor struggles and labor issues worldwide. <http://www.labornet.net/>
- Sweatshopwatch: News and campaigns on both domestic and international sweatshops. <http://www.sweatshopwatch.org/>

#### POVERTY

- Institute for Women's Policy Research: IWPR focuses on issues of poverty and welfare, employment, work and family issues. <http://www.iwpr.org/>

# **BOWLING FOR COLUMBINE & MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.**

Social Science

Have students read Martin Luther King, Jr.'s speech delivered April 4, 1967, one year before his assassination. (See printable version below.)

## **DISCUSS**

- Dr. King says that the war in Vietnam is but a symptom of a far deeper malady within the American spirit. How does **Martin Luther King's** view of the American collective spirit compare to that of Michael Moore's in ***Bowling for Columbine***?
- Discuss America's current state of race relations, poverty, foreign policy, civil liberties, capitalist economics, gun violence, social/peace movements. What policies would King support if he were alive today? Find evidence from his speech to support your comments.

## **CLASS/GROUP EXERCISE**

Dr. King's Speech Talks of the "Giant Triplets: RACISM, MATERIALISM and MILITARISM." Students may work alone or in groups to:

- FIND EXAMPLES of each of these three forces at work in the film *Bowling for Columbine*. List by category.
- Then DISCUSS each. In what ways are these forces at work in today's America? Groups or the entire class should design a WEB PAGE or poster with graphics of their conclusions.

## REWRITE THE SPEECH

### Students As Speech Writers

This exercise can be done as a group assignment.

- The speech's POINT OF VIEW will be Martin Luther King, Jr.'s.
- Outline key points, making the 1967 speech's core message current. Answer the question: Do current U.S. policies (foreign and domestic) reflect "symptoms of a far deeper malady within the American spirit?"
- When appropriate, bring into the speech the point of view from *Bowling for Columbine*.
- If time permits, select one student to give each speech to the class.

Possible topics for inclusion: "terrorism" of all kinds, use of U.S. military abroad, racism, poverty in U.S., welfare-to-work policies, democracy at home and abroad, capitalist economics, gun violence.

## POINT OF VIEW

- Write an E-MAIL from Michael Moore to George W. Bush (or current president) about what Moore believes Dr. King would say about the president's current policies. Write the RESPONSE e-mail from the President to Moore.
- Write an E-MAIL from Dr. King to X – what would he say to X about the United States today? [Select a character from current history, e.g.: a teenager who lives in Baghdad, a North Korean high school student, a surviving family member of the 9/11 attack, a Columbine student.] Write the RESPONSE from X to Dr. King.
- Or, in groups, use an online chat room style for the above exercise. Invite current political figures in to chat about *Bowling for Columbine*. Moore and Dr. King should be invited to chat with you. When finished, each group should share their dialogue with the class. This can be acted (role played) or as a writing assignment.

# **BEYOND VIETNAM: A TIME TO BREAK SILENCE**

Addresses given at

Riverside Church Meeting, New York City, Tuesday April 4, 1967

*Sponsored by: CLERGY AND LAYMEN CONCERNED ABOUT VIETNAM*

I come to this magnificent house of worship tonight because my conscience leaves me no other choice. I join with you in this meeting because I am in deepest agreement with the aims and work of the organization which has brought us together: Clergy and Laymen Concerned about Vietnam. The recent statement of your executive committee are the sentiments of my own heart and I found myself in full accord when I read its opening lines: "A time comes when silence is betrayal." That time has come for us in relation to Vietnam.

The truth of these words is beyond doubt but the mission to which they call us is a most difficult one. Even when pressed by the demands of inner truth, men do not easily assume the task of opposing their government's policy, especially in time of war. Nor does the human spirit move without great difficulty against all the apathy of conformist thought within one's own bosom and in the surrounding world. Moreover when the issues at hand seem as perplexed as they often do in the case of this dreadful conflict we are always on the verge of being mesmerized by uncertainty; but we must move on. Some of us who have already begun to break the silence of the night have found that the calling to speak is often a vocation of agony, but we must speak. We must speak with all the humility that is appropriate to our limited vision, but we must speak. And we must rejoice as well, for surely this is the first time in our nation's history that a significant number of its religious leaders have chosen to move beyond the prophesying of smooth patriotism to the high grounds of a firm dissent based upon the mandates of conscience and the reading of history. Perhaps a new spirit is rising among us. If it is, let us trace its movement well and pray that our own inner being may be sensitive to its guidance, for we are deeply in need of a new way beyond the darkness that seems so close around us.

Over the past two years, as I have moved to break the betrayal of my own silences and to speak from the burnings of my own heart, as I have called for radical departures from the destruction of Vietnam, many persons have questioned me about the wisdom of my path. At the heart of their concerns this query has often loomed large and loud: Why are you speaking about war, Dr. King? Why are you joining the voices of dissent? Peace and civil rights don't mix, they say. Aren't you hurting the cause of your people, they ask? And when I hear them, though I often understand the source of their concern, I am nevertheless greatly saddened, for such questions mean that the inquirers have not really known me, my commitment or my calling. Indeed, their questions suggest that they do not know the world in which they live. In the light of such tragic misunderstandings, I deem it of signal importance to try to state clearly, and I trust concisely, why I believe that the path from Dexter Avenue Baptist Church -- the church in Montgomery, Alabama, where I began my pastorate -- leads clearly to this sanctuary tonight.

I come to this platform tonight to make a passionate plea to my beloved nation.



This speech is not addressed to Hanoi or to the National Liberation Front. It is not addressed to China or to Russia. Nor is it an attempt to overlook the ambiguity of the total situation and the need for a collective solution to the tragedy of Vietnam. Neither is it an attempt to make North Vietnam or the National Liberation Front paragons of virtue, nor to overlook the role they can play in a successful resolution of the problem. While they both may have justifiable reason to be suspicious of the good faith of the United States, life and history give eloquent testimony to the fact that conflicts are never resolved without trustful give and take on both sides.

Tonight, however, I wish not to speak with Hanoi and the NLF, but rather to my fellow Americans, who, with me, bear the greatest responsibility in ending a conflict that has exacted a heavy price on both continents. Since I am a preacher by trade, I suppose it is not surprising that I have seven major reasons for bringing Vietnam into the field of my moral vision. There is at the outset a very obvious and almost facile connection between the war in Vietnam and the struggle I, and others, have been waging in America. A few years ago there was a shining moment in that struggle. It seemed as if there was a real promise of hope for the poor -- both black and white -- through the poverty program. There were experiments, hopes, new beginnings. Then came the buildup in Vietnam and I watched the program broken and eviscerated as if it were some idle political plaything of a society gone mad on war, and I knew that America would never invest the necessary funds or energies in rehabilitation of its poor so long as adventures like Vietnam continued to draw men and skills and money like some demonic destructive suction tube. So I was increasingly compelled to see the war as an enemy of the poor and to attack it as such.

Perhaps the more tragic recognition of reality took place when it became clear to me that the war was doing far more than devastating the hopes of the poor at home. It was sending their sons and their brothers and their husbands to fight and to die in extraordinarily high proportions relative to the rest of the population. We were taking the black young men who had been crippled by our society and sending them eight thousand miles away to guarantee liberties in Southeast Asia which they had not found in southwest Georgia and East Harlem. So we have been repeatedly faced with the cruel irony of watching Negro and white boys on TV screens as they kill and die together for a nation that has been unable to seat them together in the same schools. So we watch them in brutal solidarity burning the huts of a poor village, but we realize that they would never live on the same block in Detroit. I could not be silent in the face of such cruel manipulation of the poor. My third reason moves to an even deeper level of awareness, for it grows out of my experience in the ghettos of the North over the last three years -- especially the last three summers. As I have walked among the desperate, rejected and angry young men I have told them that Molotov cocktails and rifles would not solve their problems. I have tried to offer them my deepest compassion while maintaining my conviction that social change comes most meaningfully through nonviolent action. But they asked -- and rightly so -- what about Vietnam? They asked if our own nation wasn't using massive doses of violence to solve its problems, to bring about the changes it wanted. Their questions hit home, and I knew that I could never again raise my voice against the violence of the oppressed

in the ghettos without having first spoken clearly to the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today -- my own government. For the sake of those boys, for the sake of this government, for the sake of hundreds of thousands trembling under our violence, I cannot be silent.

For those who ask the question, "Aren't you a civil rights leader?" and thereby mean to exclude me from the movement for peace, I have this further answer. In 1957 when a group of us formed the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, we chose as our motto: "To save the soul of America." We were convinced that we could not limit our vision to certain rights for black people, but instead affirmed the conviction that America would never be free or saved from itself unless the descendants of its slaves were loosed completely from the shackles they still wear. In a way we were agreeing with Langston Hughes, that black bard of Harlem, who had written earlier:

O, yes, I say it plain, America never was America to me, And yet I swear this oath--  
America will be!

Now, it should be incandescently clear that no one who has any concern for the integrity and life of America today can ignore the present war. If America's soul becomes totally poisoned, part of the autopsy must read Vietnam. It can never be saved so long as it destroys the deepest hopes of men the world over. So it is that those of us who are yet determined that America will be are led down the path of protest and dissent, working for the health of our land.

As if the weight of such a commitment to the life and health of America were not enough, another burden of responsibility was placed upon me in 1964; and I cannot forget that the Nobel Prize for Peace was also a commission -- a commission to work harder than I had ever worked before for "the brotherhood of man." This is a calling that takes me beyond national allegiances, but even if it were not present I would yet have to live with the meaning of my commitment to the ministry of Jesus Christ. To me the relationship of this ministry to the making of peace is so obvious that I sometimes marvel at those who ask me why I am speaking against the war. Could it be that they do not know that the good news was meant for all men -- for Communist and capitalist, for their children and ours, for black and for white, for revolutionary and conservative? Have they forgotten that my ministry is in obedience to the one who loved his enemies so fully that he died for them? What then can I say to the "Vietcong" or to Castro or to Mao as a faithful minister of this one? Can I threaten them with death or must I not share with them my life?

Finally, as I try to delineate for you and for myself the road that leads from Montgomery to this place I would have offered all that was most valid if I simply said that I must be true to my conviction that I share with all men the calling to be a son of the living God. Beyond the calling of race or nation or creed is this vocation of sonship and brotherhood, and because I believe that the Father is deeply concerned especially for his suffering and helpless and outcast children, I come tonight to speak for them.

This I believe to be the privilege and the burden of all of us who deem ourselves bound by allegiances and loyalties which are broader and deeper than nationalism and which go beyond our nation's self-defined goals and positions. We are called to speak for the weak, for the voiceless, for victims of our nation and for those it calls enemy, for no document from human hands can make these humans any less our brothers.

And as I ponder the madness of Vietnam and search within myself for ways to understand and respond to compassion my mind goes constantly to the people of that peninsula. I speak now not of the soldiers of each side, not of the junta in Saigon, but simply of the people who have been living under the curse of war for almost three continuous decades now. I think of them too because it is clear to me that there will be no meaningful solution there until some attempt is made to know them and hear their broken cries.

They must see Americans as strange liberators. The Vietnamese people proclaimed their own independence in 1945 after a combined French and Japanese occupation, and before the Communist revolution in China. They were led by Ho Chi Minh. Even though they quoted the American Declaration of Independence in their own document of freedom, we refused to recognize them. Instead, we decided to support France in its reconquest of her former colony.

Our government felt then that the Vietnamese people were not "ready" for independence, and we again fell victim to the deadly Western arrogance that has poisoned the international atmosphere for so long. With that tragic decision we rejected a revolutionary government seeking self-determination, and a government that had been established not by China (for whom the Vietnamese have no great love) but by clearly indigenous forces that included some Communists. For the peasants this new government meant real land reform, one of the most important needs in their lives. For nine years following 1945 we denied the people of Vietnam the right of independence. For nine years we vigorously supported the French in their abortive effort to recolonize Vietnam.

Before the end of the war we were meeting eighty percent of the French war costs. Even before the French were defeated at Dien Bien Phu, they began to despair of the reckless action, but we did not. We encouraged them with our huge financial and military supplies to continue the war even after they had lost the will. Soon we would be paying almost the full costs of this tragic attempt at recolonization.

After the French were defeated it looked as if independence and land reform would come again through the Geneva agreements. But instead there came the United States, determined that Ho should not unify the temporarily divided nation, and the peasants watched again as we supported one of the most vicious modern dictators -- our chosen man, Premier Diem. The peasants watched and cringed as Diem ruthlessly routed out all opposition, supported their extortionist landlords and refused even to discuss reunification with the north. The peasants watched as all this was presided over by U.S. influence and then by increasing numbers of U.S. troops who came to help quell the insurgency that Diem's methods had

aroused. When Diem was overthrown they may have been happy, but the long line of military dictatorships seemed to offer no real change -- especially in terms of their need for land and peace.

The only change came from America as we increased our troop commitments in support of governments which were singularly corrupt, inept and without popular support. All the while the people read our leaflets and received regular promises of peace and democracy -- and land reform. Now they languish under our bombs and consider us -- not their fellow Vietnamese -- the real enemy. They move sadly and apathetically as we herd them off the land of their fathers into concentration camps where minimal social needs are rarely met. They know they must move or be destroyed by our bombs. So they go -- primarily women and children and the aged.

They watch as we poison their water, as we kill a million acres of their crops. They must weep as the bulldozers roar through their areas preparing to destroy the precious trees. They wander into the hospitals, with at least twenty casualties from American firepower for one "Vietcong"-inflicted injury. So far we may have killed a million of them -- mostly children. They wander into the towns and see thousands of the children, homeless, without clothes, running in packs on the streets like animals. They see the children, degraded by our soldiers as they beg for food. They see the children selling their sisters to our soldiers, soliciting for their mothers.

What do the peasants think as we ally ourselves with the landlords and as we refuse to put any action into our many words concerning land reform? What do they think as we test our latest weapons on them, just as the Germans tested out new medicine and new tortures in the concentration camps of Europe? Where are the roots of the independent Vietnam we claim to be building? Is it among these voiceless ones?

We have destroyed their two most cherished institutions: the family and the village. We have destroyed their land and their crops. We have cooperated in the crushing of the nation's only non-Communist revolutionary political force -- the unified Buddhist church. We have supported the enemies of the peasants of Saigon. We have corrupted their women and children and killed their men. What liberators?

Now there is little left to build on -- save bitterness. Soon the only solid physical foundations remaining will be found at our military bases and in the concrete of the concentration camps we call fortified hamlets. The peasants may well wonder if we plan to build our new Vietnam on such grounds as these? Could we blame them for such thoughts? We must speak for them and raise the questions they cannot raise. These too are our brothers.

Perhaps the more difficult but no less necessary task is to speak for those who have been designated as our enemies. What of the National Liberation Front -- that strangely anonymous group we call VC or Communists? What must they think of us in America when they realize that we permitted the repression and

cruelty of Diem which helped to bring them into being as a resistance group in the south? What do they think of our condoning the violence which led to their own taking up of arms? How can they believe in our integrity when now we speak of "aggression from the north" as if there were nothing more essential to the war? How can they trust us when now we charge them with violence after the murderous reign of Diem and charge them with violence while we pour every new weapon of death into their land? Surely we must understand their feelings even if we do not condone their actions. Surely we must see that the men we supported pressed them to their violence. Surely we must see that our own computerized plans of destruction simply dwarf their greatest acts.

How do they judge us when our officials know that their membership is less than twenty-five percent Communist and yet insist on giving them the blanket name? What must they be thinking when they know that we are aware of their control of major sections of Vietnam and yet we appear ready to allow national elections in which this highly organized political parallel government will have no part? They ask how we can speak of free elections when the Saigon press is censored and controlled by the military junta. And they are surely right to wonder what kind of new government we plan to help form without them -- the only party in real touch with the peasants. They question our political goals and they deny the reality of a peace settlement from which they will be excluded. Their questions are frighteningly relevant. Is our nation planning to build on political myth again and then shore it up with the power of new violence?

Here is the true meaning and value of compassion and nonviolence when it helps us to see the enemy's point of view, to hear his questions, to know his assessment of ourselves. For from his view we may indeed see the basic weaknesses of our own condition, and if we are mature, we may learn and grow and profit from the wisdom of the brothers who are called the opposition.

So, too, with Hanoi. In the north, where our bombs now pummel the land, and our mines endanger the waterways, we are met by a deep but understandable mistrust. To speak for them is to explain this lack of confidence in Western words, and especially their distrust of American intentions now. In Hanoi are the men who led the nation to independence against the Japanese and the French, the men who sought membership in the French commonwealth and were betrayed by the weakness of Paris and the willfulness of the colonial armies. It was they who led a second struggle against French domination at tremendous costs, and then were persuaded to give up the land they controlled between the thirteenth and seventeenth parallel as a temporary measure at Geneva. After 1954 they watched us conspire with Diem to prevent elections which would have surely brought Ho Chi Minh to power over a united Vietnam, and they realized they had been betrayed again.

When we ask why they do not leap to negotiate, these things must be remembered. Also it must be clear that the leaders of Hanoi considered the presence of American troops in support of the Diem regime to have been the initial military breach of the Geneva agreements concerning foreign troops, and they remind us that they did not begin to send in any large number of supplies or

men until American forces had moved into the tens of thousands.

Hanoi remembers how our leaders refused to tell us the truth about the earlier North Vietnamese overtures for peace, how the president claimed that none existed when they had clearly been made. Ho Chi Minh has watched as America has spoken of peace and built up its forces, and now he has surely heard of the increasing international rumors of American plans for an invasion of the north. He knows the bombing and shelling and mining we are doing are part of traditional pre-invasion strategy. Perhaps only his sense of humor and of irony can save him when he hears the most powerful nation of the world speaking of aggression as it drops thousands of bombs on a poor weak nation more than eight thousand miles away from its shores. At this point I should make it clear that while I have tried in these last few minutes to give a voice to the voiceless on Vietnam and to understand the arguments of those who are called enemy, I am as deeply concerned about our troops there as anything else. For it occurs to me that what we are submitting them to in Vietnam is not simply the brutalizing process that goes on in any war where armies face each other and seek to destroy. We are adding cynicism to the process of death, for they must know after a short period there that none of the things we claim to be fighting for are really involved. Before long they must know that their government has sent them into a struggle among Vietnamese, and the more sophisticated surely realize that we are on the side of the wealthy and the secure while we create hell for the poor.

Somehow this madness must cease. We must stop now. I speak as a child of God and brother to the suffering poor of Vietnam. I speak for those whose land is being laid waste, whose homes are being destroyed, whose culture is being subverted. I speak for the poor of America who are paying the double price of smashed hopes at home and death and corruption in Vietnam. I speak as a citizen of the world, for the world as it stands aghast at the path we have taken. I speak as an American to the leaders of my own nation. The great initiative in this war is ours. The initiative to stop it must be ours.

This is the message of the great Buddhist leaders of Vietnam. Recently one of them wrote these words:

"Each day the war goes on the hatred increases in the heart of the Vietnamese and in the hearts of those of humanitarian instinct. The Americans are forcing even their friends into becoming their enemies. It is curious that the Americans, who calculate so carefully on the possibilities of military victory, do not realize that in the process they are incurring deep psychological and political defeat. The image of America will never again be the image of revolution, freedom and democracy, but the image of violence and militarism."

If we continue, there will be no doubt in my mind and in the mind of the world that we have no honorable intentions in Vietnam. It will become clear that our minimal expectation is to occupy it as an American colony and men will not refrain from thinking that our maximum hope is to goad China into a war so that we may bomb her nuclear installations. If we do not stop our war against the people of Vietnam immediately the world will be left with no other alternative



than to see this as some horribly clumsy and deadly game we have decided to play.

The world now demands a maturity of America that we may not be able to achieve. It demands that we admit that we have been wrong from the beginning of our adventure in Vietnam, that we have been detrimental to the life of the Vietnamese people. The situation is one in which we must be ready to turn sharply from our present ways.

In order to atone for our sins and errors in Vietnam, we should take the initiative in bringing a halt to this tragic war. I would like to suggest five concrete things that our government should do immediately to begin the long and difficult process of extricating ourselves from this nightmarish conflict:

1. End all bombing in North and South Vietnam.
2. Declare a unilateral cease-fire in the hope that such action will create the atmosphere for negotiation.
3. Take immediate steps to prevent other battlegrounds in Southeast Asia by curtailing our military buildup in Thailand and our interference in Laos.
4. Realistically accept the fact that the National Liberation Front has substantial support in South Vietnam and must thereby play a role in any meaningful negotiations and in any future Vietnam government.
5. Set a date that we will remove all foreign troops from Vietnam in accordance with the 1954 Geneva agreement.

Part of our ongoing commitment might well express itself in an offer to grant asylum to any Vietnamese who fears for his life under a new regime which included the Liberation Front. Then we must make what reparations we can for the damage we have done. We must provide the medical aid that is badly needed, making it available in this country if necessary. Meanwhile we in the churches and synagogues have a continuing task while we urge our government to disengage itself from a disgraceful commitment. We must continue to raise our voices if our nation persists in its perverse ways in Vietnam. We must be prepared to match actions with words by seeking out every creative means of protest possible.

As we counsel young men concerning military service we must clarify for them our nation's role in Vietnam and challenge them with the alternative of conscientious objection. I am pleased to say that this is the path now being chosen by more than seventy students at my own alma mater, Morehouse College, and I recommend it to all who find the American course in Vietnam a dishonorable and unjust one. Moreover I would encourage all ministers of draft age to give up their ministerial exemptions and seek status as conscientious objectors. These are the times for real choices and not false ones. We are at the moment when our lives must be placed on the line if our nation is to survive its own folly. Every man of humane convictions must decide on the protest that best suits his convictions, but we must all protest.

There is something seductively tempting about stopping there and sending us all off on what in some circles has become a popular crusade against the war in Vietnam. I say we must enter the struggle, but I wish to go on now to say something even more disturbing. The war in Vietnam is but a symptom of a far deeper malady within the American spirit, and if we ignore this sobering reality we will find ourselves organizing clergy- and laymen-concerned committees for the next generation. They will be concerned about Guatemala and Peru. They will be concerned about Thailand and Cambodia. They will be concerned about Mozambique and South Africa. We will be marching for these and a dozen other names and attending rallies without end unless there is a significant and profound change in American life and policy. Such thoughts take us beyond Vietnam, but not beyond our calling as sons of the living God.

In 1957 a sensitive American official overseas said that it seemed to him that our nation was on the wrong side of a world revolution. During the past ten years we have seen emerge a pattern of suppression which now has justified the presence of U.S. military "advisors" in Venezuela. This need to maintain social stability for our investments accounts for the counter-revolutionary action of American forces in Guatemala. It tells why American helicopters are being used against guerrillas in Colombia and why American napalm and green beret forces have already been active against rebels in Peru. It is with such activity in mind that the words of the late John F. Kennedy come back to haunt us. Five years ago he said, "Those who make peaceful revolution impossible will make violent revolution inevitable."

Increasingly, by choice or by accident, this is the role our nation has taken -- the role of those who make peaceful revolution impossible by refusing to give up the privileges and the pleasures that come from the immense profits of overseas investment.

I am convinced that if we are to get on the right side of the world revolution, we as a nation must undergo a radical revolution of values. We must rapidly begin the shift from a "thing-oriented" society to a "person-oriented" society. When machines and computers, profit motives and property rights are considered more important than people, the giant triplets of racism, materialism, and militarism are incapable of being conquered.

A true revolution of values will soon cause us to question the fairness and justice of many of our past and present policies. On the one hand we are called to play the good Samaritan on life's roadside; but that will be only an initial act. One day we must come to see that the whole Jericho road must be transformed so that men and women will not be constantly beaten and robbed as they make their journey on life's highway. True compassion is more than flinging a coin to a beggar; it is not haphazard and superficial. It comes to see that an edifice which produces beggars needs restructuring. A true revolution of values will soon look uneasily on the glaring contrast of poverty and wealth. With righteous indignation, it will look across the seas and see individual capitalists of the West investing huge sums of money in Asia, Africa and South America, only to take the profits out with no concern for the social betterment of the countries, and say: "This is not just." It will look at our alliance with the landed gentry of Latin America and say: "This is not



just." The Western arrogance of feeling that it has everything to teach others and nothing to learn from them is not just. A true revolution of values will lay hands on the world order and say of war: "This way of settling differences is not just." This business of burning human beings with napalm, of filling our nation's homes with orphans and widows, of injecting poisonous drugs of hate into veins of people normally humane, of sending men home from dark and bloody battlefields physically handicapped and psychologically deranged, cannot be reconciled with wisdom, justice and love. A nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual death.

America, the richest and most powerful nation in the world, can well lead the way in this revolution of values. There is nothing, except a tragic death wish, to prevent us from reordering our priorities, so that the pursuit of peace will take precedence over the pursuit of war. There is nothing to keep us from molding a recalcitrant status quo with bruised hands until we have fashioned it into a brotherhood.

This kind of positive revolution of values is our best defense against communism. War is not the answer. Communism will never be defeated by the use of atomic bombs or nuclear weapons. Let us not join those who shout war and through their misguided passions urge the United States to relinquish its participation in the United Nations. These are days which demand wise restraint and calm reasonableness. We must not call everyone a Communist or an appeaser who advocates the seating of Red China in the United Nations and who recognizes that hate and hysteria are not the final answers to the problem of these turbulent days. We must not engage in a negative anti-communism, but rather in a positive thrust for democracy, realizing that our greatest defense against communism is to take offensive action in behalf of justice. We must with positive action seek to remove those conditions of poverty, insecurity and injustice which are the fertile soil in which the seed of communism grows and develops.

These are revolutionary times. All over the globe men are revolting against old systems of exploitation and oppression and out of the wombs of a frail world new systems of justice and equality are being born. The shirtless and barefoot people of the land are rising up as never before. "The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light." We in the West must support these revolutions. It is a sad fact that, because of comfort, complacency, a morbid fear of communism, and our proneness to adjust to injustice, the Western nations that initiated so much of the revolutionary spirit of the modern world have now become the arch anti-revolutionaries. This has driven many to feel that only Marxism has the revolutionary spirit. Therefore, communism is a judgment against our failure to make democracy real and follow through on the revolutions we initiated. Our only hope today lies in our ability to recapture the revolutionary spirit and go out into a sometimes hostile world declaring eternal hostility to poverty, racism, and militarism. With this powerful commitment we shall boldly challenge the status quo and unjust mores and thereby speed the day when "every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight and the rough places plain."

A genuine revolution of values means in the final analysis that our loyalties must become ecumenical rather than sectional. Every nation must now develop an overriding loyalty to mankind as a whole in order to preserve the best in their individual societies.

This call for a world-wide fellowship that lifts neighborly concern beyond one's tribe, race, class and nation is in reality a call for an all-embracing and unconditional love for all men. This oft misunderstood and misinterpreted concept -- so readily dismissed by the Nietzsches of the world as a weak and cowardly force -- has now become an absolute necessity for the survival of man. When I speak of love I am not speaking of some sentimental and weak response. I am speaking of that force which all of the great religions have seen as the supreme unifying principle of life. Love is somehow the key that unlocks the door which leads to ultimate reality. This Hindu-Moslem-Christian-Jewish-Buddhist belief about ultimate reality is beautifully summed up in the first epistle of Saint John:

Let us love one another; for love is God and everyone that loveth is born of God and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. If we love one another God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us. Let us hope that this spirit will become the order of the day. We can no longer afford to worship the god of hate or bow before the altar of retaliation. The oceans of history are made turbulent by the ever-rising tides of hate. History is cluttered with the wreckage of nations and individuals that pursued this self-defeating path of hate. As Arnold Toynbee says : "Love is the ultimate force that makes for the saving choice of life and good against the damning choice of death and evil. Therefore the first hope in our inventory must be the hope that love is going to have the last word." We are now faced with the fact that tomorrow is today. We are confronted with the fierce urgency of now. In this unfolding conundrum of life and history there is such a thing as being too late. Procrastination is still the thief of time. Life often leaves us standing bare, naked and dejected with a lost opportunity. The "tide in the affairs of men" does not remain at the flood; it ebbs. We may cry out desperately for time to pause in her passage, but time is deaf to every plea and rushes on. Over the bleached bones and jumbled residue of numerous civilizations are written the pathetic words: "Too late." There is an invisible book of life that faithfully records our vigilance or our neglect. "The moving finger writes, and having writ moves on..." We still have a choice today; nonviolent coexistence or violent co-annihilation. We must move past indecision to action. We must find new ways to speak for peace in Vietnam and justice throughout the developing world -- a world that borders on our doors. If we do not act we shall surely be dragged down the long dark and shameful corridors of time reserved for those who possess power without compassion, might without morality, and strength without sight.

Now let us begin. Now let us rededicate ourselves to the long and bitter -- but beautiful -- struggle for a new world. This is the calling of the sons of God, and our brothers wait eagerly for our response. Shall we say the odds are too great? Shall we tell them the struggle is too hard? Will our message be that the forces of American life militate against their arrival as full men, and we send our deepest

regrets? Or will there be another message, of longing, of hope, of solidarity with their yearnings, of commitment to their cause, whatever the cost? The choice is ours, and though we might prefer it otherwise we must choose in this crucial moment of human history.

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# TOLERANCE UNIT

Across The Curriculum

## OVERVIEW

In an effort to increase multicultural awareness and promote an understanding of our diverse world, this mini-unit would hope to challenge the students to evaluate their perceived world and, in the process, create a new sense of reality. The ultimate goal is to eliminate potentially harmful perceptions and nurture a more tolerant viewpoint of people who are different from them. Tolerance is an essential component democracy but is often forsaken in the name of American Individualism. Tolerance on the part of each and every citizen means an attitude devoid of arrogance in relations between generations, the sexes, individuals and communities. With this unit, a summary of choice theory and the five basic needs will be taught and it will be demonstrated how they are applicable to all humans, regardless of differences in meeting those needs. Also, the unit will bring together two communities of different students and cultivate awareness.

## DETAILS

### DAY 1 : STEREOTYPES

- A. Ask students to close their eyes for a moment and imagine a lawyer, then a police officer, then a doctor, then a criminal. Ask them to raise their hands (or think about) if they saw one of the following: a female lawyer, an Asian American police officer, a Latino doctor or a white criminal. Explain that stereotypes operate so subtly that sometimes we do not even notice them. Offer a definition of stereotypes: *A generalized assumption about a whole group of people based on inadequate or oversimplified facts.*
- B. Then, list the following types of people on the board and ask students to assign each a race or nationality based on stereotypes. Have them fill in details about how each type of person dresses, how they talk, where they live and what they value most in life.
  - a. Chemistry professor
  - b. Rap musician
  - c. Gang member
  - d. Bank president
  - e. Hair stylist
  - f. Religious fundamentalist
  - g. Goth musician
  - h. Militia member
- C. Now ask the students to imagine the rap musician matching the description of the bank president, or the hair stylist fitting the description of the religious fundamentalist. Discuss why it seems easy to think in terms of

stereotypes. Consider the harm done by stereotypes when they are applied to entire groups of people.

## DAY 2 : INTRODUCE CHOICE THEORY AND FIVE BASIC NEEDS

- A. Explain why and how all organisms behave.
- B. Explain that all of our behaviors are purposeful in satisfying our needs.
- C. In groups of 3-4, have students discuss possible definitions for the basic needs.
  - Belonging
  - Power
  - Freedom
  - Fun
  - Survival
- D. Discuss as a class each group's definition and develop a definition for each need.
- E. Review the list of people the class stereotyped the day before and discuss which needs each person is possibly living out.
- F. Have each student evaluate and write a summary of how each need is satisfied in the student's own personal life. Be conscious of how you can identify these areas in your behavior.

## DAY 3

- A. Have students copy the following from the board and discuss its meaning.

The Five Basic Needs are:

- a. innate – we are all born with them
- b. universal – worldwide
- c. general – individuals will make them specific
- d. overlapping – more than one can be fulfilled at one time
- e. conflicting – filling one need may impinge on another

- B.* Group sharing: Separate students into groups of 3-4 and have them share their personal summaries from Day 2 with the group. Encourage each group to compare similarities and differences in the way each student behaves to satisfy the five needs.
- C.* Process and synthesize information: Have each group report to class what they have learned from the process sharing their similarities and differences in behavior based on their needs. In the process, students will have self-evaluated and come to an understanding of how universal these needs are. Their peers will not seem that different and they may develop the capacity to respect others based on this awareness. This is exactly what tolerance is.
- D.* Explain to the class that for the remainder of the semester, each student will exchange letters with a student from another school (urban or rural depending on the one's school) that may be socioeconomically, racially and culturally different. The objective will be to create awareness through the exchange of ideas and thoughts with one another. The first assignment will require the students to create a written picture of who they are, incorporating four of the five needs in the letter.

Example:

- What do they do for fun (fun)?
- What groups, clubs, teams or church do they belong to (belongings)?
- What kind of job do they want (power)?

## ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY

Exchange pictures but do not tell the students which picture belongs to their pen pal. They have to guess based on the information they have exchanged with each other. Their initial guess may change as they exchange future letters. Students and the teacher may want to examine why they have chosen a particular picture and what stereotypes may have affected their choice.

## **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

The participating school would ideally go through the same process of breaking down stereotypes and understanding the five basic needs. Letter topics would be agreed upon by each teacher and would be exchanged biweekly. The project could potentially tear down stereotypes and create an awareness of the different communities. Choice Theory could greatly enhance this process by creating an understanding of our basic needs and how universal those needs are. It may raise the question, “knowing my needs as a person, how can I act them out in a more tolerant way?”

## **CULMINATING ACTIVITY**

Towards the end of the semester many possibilities exist. The participating schools could have a student exchange on a campus for a day and vice versa. The pen pals would finally have the opportunity to meet and then escort each other throughout the day. The social science classes could have a discussion on the stereotypes of each school and of the students. They could evaluate how the project changed their perceptions.

# WHOSE TERRORISM?

Social Science

A classroom activity enlists students in defining terrorism and then applying their definitions to world events.

*By Bill Bigelow*

Winter 2001 / 2002

Shortly after the horrific Sept. 11 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, President Bush denounced these as acts of war and proclaimed a "war on terrorism." But what exactly was to be the target of this war? What precisely did the president mean by terrorism? Despite uttering the words terror, terrorist or terrorism 32 times in his Sept. 20 speech to the nation, he never once defined them.

Teachers need to engage our students in a deep critical reading of terms - such as "terrorism," "freedom," "patriotism," and "our way of life" - that evoke vivid images but can be used for ambiguous ends (see "**What is terrorism, who are the terrorists?**" for definitions of "terrorism").

## LESSON ON TERRORISM

I wanted to design a lesson that would get students to surface the definitions of terrorism that they carry around - albeit most likely unconsciously. And I wanted them to apply their definitions to a number of episodes, historical and contemporary, that involved some kind of violence or destruction. I didn't know for certain, but my hunch was that, as students applied definitions consistently, they might be able to call into question the "We're Good/They're Bad" dichotomies that have become even more pronounced on the political landscape.

I wrote up several "What is terrorism?" scenarios, but instead of using the actual names of countries involved I substituted Country A, Country B, etc. Given the widespread conflation of patriotism with support for U.S. government policies, I had no confidence that students would be able to label an action taken by their government as "terrorism" unless I attached pseudonyms to each country.

In the following scenario I used the example of U.S. support for the Nicaraguan Contras in the 1980s. Country A is the United States, B is Nicaragua, and the country next door is Honduras:

*"The government of Country A is very unhappy with the government of Country B, whose leaders came to power in a revolution that threw out the former Country B dictator. Country A decides to do everything in its power to overthrow the new leaders of Country B. It begins funding a guerrilla army that attacks Country B from another country next door. Country A also builds army bases in the country next door and allows the guerrilla army to use its bases.*



*Country A supplies almost all of the weapons and supplies of the guerrilla army fighting Country B. The guerrillas generally try to avoid fighting Country B's army. Instead, they attack clinics, schools, cooperative farms. Sometimes they mine the roads. Many, many civilians are killed and maimed by the Country A-supported guerrillas. Consistently, the guerrillas raid Country B and then retreat into the country next door where Country A has military bases."*

#### QUESTIONS:

- Which, if any, of these activities should be considered "terrorism" according to your definition?
- Who are the "terrorists"?
- What more would you need to know to be more sure of your answer?

I knew that in such compressed scenarios lots of important details would be missing; hence, I included question 3 to invite students to consider other details that might influence their decisions.

Other scenarios included Israeli soldiers taunting and shooting children in Palestinian refugee camps, with the assistance of U.S. military aid; Indian farmers burning Monsanto-supplied, genetically modified cotton crops and threatening to destroy Monsanto offices; the 1998 U.S. cruise missile attack on Sudan's main pharmaceutical plant; and sanctions against Iraq that according to the UN reports have killed as many as a half million children.

## DEFINING TERRORISM

As I'm on leave this year, my colleague Sandra Childs invited me into her Franklin High School classroom to teach this lesson to her 11th grade Global Studies students. I began by asking students to write down their own personal definitions of terrorism and to keep these questions in mind: Does terrorism need to involve the killing of many people or can it affect just one person? Can it involve simply the destruction of property, with no injuries? Can governments commit acts of terrorism, or is the term reserved only for people who operate outside of governments? Must terrorism involve the people of one country attacking citizens of another country? Does motive make a difference? Does terrorism need to be intentional?

Immediately following, I explained to students that, in preparation for an activity, I'd like them to get into small groups and read their individual definitions to one another to see if they could build a consensus definition of terrorism. They could choose an exemplary definition from one member or, if they preferred, cobble one together from their separate definitions.

Some groups quickly agreed upon definitions; others would have spent the entire 83-minute class if Sandra and I had let them. In most cases, the definitions were

simple, but thoughtful. For example, "intentional acts that create terror, targeted towards a specific group, or innocent people. Not just directly, but indirectly."

I distributed the "What is terrorism?" scenarios to students, reviewed the instructions with them, and emphasized that all the scenarios were real. Their main task was to read each situation and to decide whether any of the actions described met their group's definition of "terrorism." I made sure they understood that Country A in one situation would not necessarily be the same Country A in the next situation, and gave them permission to approach the situations in whatever order they liked.

Watching students attempt to apply their definitions of terrorism, I was impressed by their eagerness to be consistent. As Sandra and I wandered from group to group, we heard students arguing over whether there was a distinction between oppression and terrorism. Most groups wanted more information on the motives of various actors. Some insisted that if a country supported terrorist acts in another country, then it too was a terrorist; others held that a supporting country could not be held fully responsible for the actions of the actual perpetrators - but if a country knew about terrorism being enabled with its funds and did nothing to prevent it, then it too could be considered guilty of terrorism.

Although this activity was far too involved to be neatly contained in an 83-minute class, by the end many students came to important insights. One student said, "Ever since they announced that we were going to have a war on terrorism, I have wondered who or what a terrorist is. And ... it's suspicious that they still haven't defined terrorism." I asked students why they thought the U.S. government had failed to offer a clear definition of terrorism. One student said, "If you don't have any boundaries, then anyone can be a terrorist." Another said, "The U.S. government won't define terrorism because they don't want to be able to be considered terrorists."

These comments echoed Eqbal Ahmad's insight that countries that have no intention of being consistent will resist defining terms. As one student wrote after the activity: "I also realized how many terrorism acts the U.S. has committed. When our government doesn't define terrorism, it makes me think that they just want a free shot to kill anyone they want." Wrote another student: "Bush *needs* to define terrorism in front of our nation before he does anything else, and then he needs to stick with the definition, not bend it to suit the U.S."

But then there was this student comment: "I, myself, am really tired of hearing about it. If I go to war, so what, I'll fight for my country. What does this have to do with global studies?" And this young man: "I feel if we don't get our revenge against these 'terrorists' it will diminish the trust of our nation towards our government."

These remarks reminded me of being in the classroom during the fall of 1990, after Iraq had invaded Kuwait and the United States was assembling its military attack force. Many students resisted critical analysis, sensing that critique eroded the "patriotic" unity then building in the country - that appending a "not so fast" onto the flag-waving interrupted a sense of collective purpose that felt good to many of them. At least that was how I read some students' resistance. During

times of war, students may regard even the mildest critical examination of government policy as unpatriotic or even subversive. Nonetheless, I was impressed by how many students in Sandra's classes appeared eager to question their government's framing of key issues.

As we wrapped up in one class, Sandra asked a wonderful question: "What difference do you think it would make if students all over the country were having the discussion that we're having today?"

There were two quick answers before the bell rang: "I'd feel a lot better about the U.S.," and "I think we'd lose a lot of people who'd want to go fight for the country."

My interpretation: The more students understand about the exercise of U.S. power in the world - both military and economic - the less likely they are to want to extend it.

## ECONOMIC TERRORISM

After I'd used the "What is Terrorism?" situations with Sandra's classes, I realized that, with the exception of sanctions, all of them were incidents of direct attacks on civilians or property. Did my examples narrow students' consideration of "terrorism"?

In her article "Solidarity Against All Forms of terrorism," Indian environmentalist and scholar Vandana Shiva urges us to embrace a more expansive notion of terrorism. She asks us to consider "economic policies which push people into poverty and starvation as a form of terrorism," such as International Monetary Fund/World Bank-mandated structural adjustment programs that force governments to cut food and medical programs, with the full knowledge of the misery this will engender. In India, Shiva writes:

*50 million tribals who have been flooded out of their homes by dams over the past 4 decades were also victims of terrorism - they have faced the terror of technology and destructive development. ... The whole world repeatedly watched the destruction of the World Trade Center towers, but the destruction of millions of sacred shrines and homes and farms by forces of injustice, greed, and globalization go unnoticed.*

To help students consider whether some situations could be considered economic terrorism, I've added several new "What is Terrorism?" scenarios. One deals with deaths in southern Africa from AIDS, where, for instance, international banks have forced the Zambian government to pay annual debt service charges greater than spending on health and education *combined* and where, according to the United Nations, life expectancy will soon drop to *33 years*, a level not seen in the Western world since medieval times. Another new scenario focuses on transnational corporations that knowingly pay wages that are insufficient to sustain life.

## TERRORISM'S GHOSTS

The U.S. government is ill-placed to lecture the world about terrorism, especially when it has never bothered to define it. Writing in the British daily *The Guardian*, Indian novelist Arundhati Roy offered the perspective of an individual who is on the receiving end of U.S. global power:

*The Sept. 11 attacks were a monstrous calling card from a world gone horribly wrong. The message may have been written by bin Laden (who knows?) and delivered by his couriers, but it could well have been signed by the ghosts of the victims of America's old wars. The millions killed in Korea, Vietnam and Cambodia, the 17,500 killed when Israel - backed by the U.S. - invaded Lebanon in 1982, the 200,000 Iraqis killed in Operation Desert Storm, the thousands of Palestinians who have died fighting Israel's occupation of the West Bank. And the millions who died, in Yugoslavia, Somalia, Haiti, Chile, Nicaragua, El Salvador, the Dominican Republic, Panama, at the hands of all the terrorists, dictators and genocidists whom the American government supported, trained, bankrolled and supplied with arms. And this is far from being a comprehensive list.*

It's not our role as teachers to climb on our soapbox to rail about U.S. foreign policy. And yet without an honest examination of events like those listed by Roy, how can we expect students to maintain any critical perspective on the U.S. "war against terrorism"? Let's clarify with students what precisely we mean by terrorism. And then let's encourage students to apply this definition to U.S. conduct in the world.

Underlying this curricular demand for consistency is the basic democratic, indeed human, premise that the lives of people from one nation are not worth more than the lives of people from another. A Pakistani university student, Nabil Ahmed, expressed this sentiment to the *Christian Science Monitor*: "There is only one way for America to be a friend of Islam. And that is if they consider our lives to be as precious as their own."

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Bill Bigelow ([bbpdx@aol.com](mailto:bbpdx@aol.com)) teaches at Franklin High School in Portland, Oregon. He is an editor of the quarterly education journal *Rethinking Schools* and co-editor of *Rethinking Globalization: Teaching for Justice in an Unjust World*.

# **CREATE YOUR OWN CARTOON HISTORY**

Social Science, Communications

Show the film's cartoon "A Brief History of the United States."

- Discuss its focus on the origins of FEAR in our society.
- Ask: What parts of U.S. history does the cartoon *not* include that the students think should be included? Why?
- Discuss with students the effectiveness of the use of humor to convey information and messages.
- How would students bring the cartoon up to date (what should be included post-September 11, 2001)?

Have students (as a class or in groups) create their own CARTOON HISTORY by selecting a specific theme/topic or a historical period. Share cartoons or set up a gallery of Cartoon History.

[Alternatively, students could create a collage to illustrate some aspect of U.S. history.]

# **JOURNALISM**

Language Arts, Social Science, Communications

1. Have students create questions they would have asked any of the people in the film.
2. CREATE AN INTERVIEW on the topic “WHAT MAKES THE U.S. DIFFERENT?” including both the questions to and the answers from one of the following individuals:
3. Matt Stone; James Nichols; Dick Clark; Marilyn Manson; Charlton Heston
4. Write a newspaper editorial on any topic raised in the film. (e.g., culture of violence in the United States, media and fear, U.S. militarism and global intervention, etc.)
5. Write a review of the film.
6. Make a short documentary film on a topic from the movie. (See documentary film project.)
7. Watch the film – focus on how the scenes are edited together from the point of view of story evolution. How does Moore build tension? For example, look at the juxtaposition of the Kosovo bombing with the Columbine shooting or the idea of having basic needs taken care of (e.g., universal healthcare in Canada) versus the condition of Flint (Beecher), Michigan. Focus on what is “wanted” in the film. What are the obstacles and what are the outcomes?
8. Write a Corporate Cops Episode for TV. (See lesson plan: *Corporate Cops–Write Your Own Episode.*)
9. DESIGN an INVESTIGATIVE RESEARCH PROJECT on a topic from the film. Include:
  - a defense of the importance of your topic
  - the questions you want to answer
  - how you would carry out your investigation
  - sources you would use

# DRAMA

Use With All Subject Areas

## GAME AND EXERCISES

The following Introduction game and exercises are specific for theater classes but can be used in all classes.

### “INTO” GAME—WARM-UP EXERCISE

Have students work in groups of 5-6 to improvise tableaux focusing on different hot topics that they create out of the prompt: What is a hot topic on campus? For example, the students could use the topic of violence in the media, teen pregnancy, cheating, etc. Take the images created by each tableaux and build a short scene to present to the class.

## PREP STUDENTS

When watching the film, use the ***Student Movie Guide*** or have students focus on how the scenes are edited together as a way to look at story evolution (i.e., how does Michael Moore build tension as the film progresses?)

- Focus on what is “wanted” by different people in the film.
- What are the obstacles and what are the outcomes?

## AFTER THE FILM

Warm up with a game of “statues” in which each group showcases what they believe to be an emotional and/or important essence from the film as a lead-in to a discussion. In the game of “statues,” the actors form groups of 5-6 and are given a theme or emotion from the film: FEAR, LOVE, VIOLENCE, HATE, SADNESS, ANGER, CONFUSION, GRIEF, etc. The audience does not know the group’s theme/emotion—the group must convey it to the audience through their statue.

1. The first actor comes to center stage and holds a tableau that somehow exhibits that emotion/theme.
2. The next actor builds upon the “statue” by adding to the theme/emotion.
3. Each actor in the group continues to build on the “statue” until one commanding theme is given in physical expression to the audience.
4. They hold the “statue” for a few moments and then each actor peels off one by one and turns his/her back to the audience in a line upstage. When every actor is in line, the game is complete and the audience has to guess the theme/ emotion.

## THEATER AS A SOCIAL RESPONSE—WORD FOR WORD PROJECT

“Word for word” is an abstract type of theater in which the ensemble interprets a piece of text by turning it into a production in which the text is presented word for word in a creative way. In a “word for word” interpretation, the goal is to deliver every word—the dialogue, the description and the “he said’s” or “she replied’s” in the text. However, you aren’t just standing up there presenting a text as story time with narrators. While delivering the “word for words”, you will be physically presenting the text for the audience to see.

In *Bowling for Columbine*, Michael Moore offers a social response to the issues of gun violence in America and the creation of fear in its audience that the media relies on (these are just two of his many social commentaries).

After watching Michael Moore’s film, the students will create a piece of “word for word” theater in which they use the text of articles, short stories, poems, essays (even Moore’s film if they choose), etc., to create a piece of theater that acts as a social response to an important topic.

### EACH GROUP OF 6-8 ACTORS WILL DO THE FOLLOWING:

1. Choose at least three pieces of text to interpret word for word that all revolve around the same social topic.
2. Break the texts down into a cohesive script in which everyone in the ensemble has lines to deliver. Be creative (you can have five different people deliver one sentence or the entire ensemble deliver a single word for emphasis). Also, if transitions are necessary between pieces, make sure that the transitions are obvious.
3. Make sure the piece has a clear introduction to the topic and adequate closure.



4. Stay on stage during the entire show.
5. Stay within a 7-10-minute time window.
6. Wear simple, ensemble-based costumes that imply the topic.

# **DOCUMENTARY FILM PROJECT**

Theater, Film, Social Science, Communications, Journalism And / Or Language Arts

After watching the film, have students work in groups of 5-6. The goal is to create a 6-8- minute documentary film focusing on a hot topic. Each group should select a hot topic that they feel impacts them on their campus or in their lives. These hot topics can come from the film, from their exercises leading up to the film or can be anything the students want to explore.

## **BRAINSTORMING**

The students should meet and discuss their hot topic. They should break down the topic and ask each member of the group to be responsible for some research surrounding their topic that they can bring to class the next day. They should decide on a DRIVING QUESTION for their project, and this will guide the outcome of their film. For example, if the students are looking at the issue of drugs on campus, they might decide that the overall question they want to answer is “Why do some students refuse the offer of drugs whereas other students go as far as to carry drug use to school?” They need to decide on this driving question before they start interviewing and build smaller mini-questions related to it to guide their inquiry. (Mini-questions are 4-5 offshoots, more specific questions that help define the driving question.)

## **INTERVIEWING**

Each group should create a list of 6-8 possible people to interview for their documentary and create a list of questions to ask these people. In the final film, they should include at least five interviews with a diverse interviewing group (i.e., don’t just interview other students, but have students, teachers, community members, the principal, etc.)

## **STORYBOARDING**

Each group should make some fingernail sketches of what they want the specific sections of their film to look like, but place each desired scene on a separate sheet of paper, so that they can decide later where they want the scenes to fall in their film. They will have a better understanding of the order in which they want their scenes the closer they get to filming.

## **SCRIPTWRITING (TREATMENT/OUTLINE)**

Students should first write an outline (the Treatment) of each interview. Next the student should write the text (voice-over that will surround each of their interviews as well as the lead-in to the film (like Michael Moore's first voice-over) and a closing voice-over at the end of the film. The script will be a breathing thing as they move along in the process. They will add to it with each interview they decide to use.

## FILMING

(If filming is not available, the students can act their scripts out live using actors to fill in for the people they interviewed; in this case, a script based on the actual interviews is essential.) Unless they have good editing programs to work with at home or at school, the students should film in order as much as possible.

# **ROLE OF THE MEDIA**

Social Science, Journalism, Communications, Humanities

## **OVERVIEW**

The media has played a central role in shaping the social values of the last half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This one-block/period activity helps students begin to understand the media's role in social history and how the media shapes our social values. Students will view five slides of media images from the 1950s, 1960s, 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s and record their immediate emotional responses to each slide. This leads to a discussion about the impact of the media on our perceptions of family, violence, women, race and money. Finally, students discuss the larger issue of how the media shapes social values.

## **DETAILS**

1. Tell students that they will be viewing five slides of media images from the 1950s to the 1990s. Explain to students that the word media refers to the outlets through which information reaches the public, through television, films, magazines, the Internet and newspapers.
2. Project each slide and have students respond in writing to the corresponding questions for each slide. Tell them to record their initial reactions without talking to other class members. Have students follow this procedure for each of the five slides.
3. When students have finished responding in writing, ask them to write a one-paragraph response to the impact of the media on our perceptions. Tell them to use examples to support their opinions and to be prepared to defend their positions at the end of the class period.
4. When students have completed their written responses, show each slide again and discuss students' reactions, with the focus of this discussion on encouraging students to think of ways in which the media creates social values through the use of strong images that create immediate emotional responses in viewers.

## SLIDE QUESTIONS

1. 1950s slide of family (could be a picture from a popular TV program such as "Leave it to Beaver" or from a popular magazine such as Life).
  - a. What do you see in this slide?
  - b. How does this family compare to most of the families you know?
  - c. What impression of family life does this photograph create?
2. 1960s slide of violence (photo of fatalities in a war, perhaps in Vietnam).
  - a. What do you see in this slide?
  - b. What do you feel for the people in this image?
  - c. How do you think the American public would respond to this image if they were told the people were killed by American soldiers?
3. 1970s slide of a women (maybe a women holding up an ERA sign in protest).
  - a. Describe this woman.
  - b. Does this image look out of the ordinary? Why?
  - c. How does this image make you feel? Why?
4. 1980s slide of African-American (perhaps of Bill Cosby in the "Cosby Show" depicting an African-American middle-class family).
  - a. What do you see in this slide?
  - b. How does this family compare with your image of the typical African-American family?
  - c. If you saw this same photo of a Caucasian family, would you have a different impression?
5. 1990s slide of money (perhaps a new gated community or a luxury car).
  - a. What do you see in this slide?
  - b. How does this image make you feel?
  - c. Do you think most people would have the same reaction you have? Who would feel differently? Why?

## ONE-PARAGRAPH RESPONSE QUESTION

Write a one-paragraph essay in which you take an initial stand on the question: To what degree does the media shape our values?

## DISCUSSION

After you have finished discussing the slides, ask the following questions that relate to their one-paragraph essay.

- Are our emotions and perspectives created and manipulated by the media?
- Or does the media merely reflect what is already happening in society?
- Could the media hurt a person or a cause? Help a person or a cause? How?
- Name a few examples of media images you think shape social values today.
- How do they accomplish this?

## WRAP-UP

Finish with having different students reflect once more on the question:

*To what degree does the media shape our social values?*

# THE “REAL” REALITY TELEVISION

## OVERVIEW

In this three-day group activity, students break into groups of five to create a scene from a reality television program about a scenario that actually reflects reality involving a place the United States has intervened – Vietnam, Palestine, Grenada, Nicaragua, Bolivia, Honduras, Iraq, Panama, Costa Rica, Iran, Somalia, the Philippines etc.... from which they create a short television scene reflecting the values, reactions, struggles, etc., of that country at the time.

As students create and share their multimedia presentation, they keep in mind a few central questions:

- How did United States intervention affect the lives of their group?
- Why does mainstream media not show “real” reality TV?
- What would American reaction be to U.S. intervention in third-world countries if “real” reality TV aired *their* lives?

## DETAILS

- Each group should be separated heterogeneously, i.e. sex, ethnicity and perceived academic ability is balanced.
- Give each member of the group a role to play: director, screenwriter, screen artist, researcher / fact checker, etc. Students will be given primary and / or secondary documents that give a thorough overview of what happened in their country because of U.S. intervention (positive and/or negative).
- Explain to students that they have been assigned to a small group in charge of creating a reality scene for television about U.S. intervention from their country perspective.
- Students will be given 2 class blocks/periods to research, create and present their scene.
- On the third day, students will present their scene to the class. After each individual scene is presented, have group members from that country explain why they created the scene the way they did and ask the audience to comment on the presentation.

## DISCUSSION

At the end of all the presentations, pose these discussion questions to the class:

- How would the American public respond if reality TV were depicting these countries, reaction to U.S. intervention?
- What are the main reasons this type of reality TV is not shown to American audiences?
- What obstacles would the producers of these “real” reality TV programs encounter?
- What is the primary reason for American television programs? Educate or entertain?



## CURRICULAR CONNECTIONS

The following is a list of some of the books/works that would connect to the film *Bowling for Columbine*. This film could be used to enrich the following works and/or to write a compare/contrast essay between the film and the work.

### BOOKS

- *Animal Farm* by George Orwell
- *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley
- *The Catcher in the Rye* by J.D. Salinger
- "Civil Disobedience" by Henry David Thoreau
- *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* by Maya Angelou
- *Lord of the Flies* by William Golding
- *Utopia* by Thomas More
- *1984* by George Orwell
- *Culture of Fear* by Barry Glassner
- *Understanding Power* by Noam Chomsky
- *A Bright Shining Lie* by Neil Sheehan (Vietnam)
- *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* by Dee Brown
- *Freedom Road* by Howard Fast
- *Downsize This!* by Michael Moore
- *Stupid White Men and Other Sorry Excuses for the State of the Nation* by Michael Moore
- *A People's History of the United States* by Howard Zinn

### FILMS OR TV

- *Roger & Me* (1989)
- "The Awful Truth" (Seasons I and II) TV Shows (1999-2000)

## SONGS

- *Imagine* by John Lennon (*Saved Fish* CD, Parlophone, 1975)
- *It Could Have Been Me* by Holly Near (*Journey* CD, Redwood, 1983)
- *Unite Children* by The Children of Selma (*Rainbow Sign* CD, Rounder, 1992)
- *The Ghost of Tom Joad* by Bruce Springsteen (*The Ghost of Tom Joad* CD, Columbia, 1995)
- *Lives in the Balance* by Jackson Browne (*Lives in the Balance* CD, Asylum, 1986)
- *Wasteland of the Free* by Iris DeMent (*The Way I Should* CD, Warner Brothers Records, 1996)
- *My Hometown* by Bruce Springsteen (*Born in the USA* CD, Columbia, 1984)
- *United Minds* by Arrested Development (*Singalamaduni* CD, Chrysalis, 1994)

## CURRICULA RESOURCES

- *Rethinking Globalization—Teaching for Justice in an Unjust World*, Edited by Bill Bigelow and Bob Peterson (A *Rethinking Schools* Publication.)  
[www.rethinkingschools.org](http://www.rethinkingschools.org)
- *Teaching for Change* catalog: [www.teachingforchange.org](http://www.teachingforchange.org) (A source of books, videos and posters for the classroom that promote social and economic justice through public education.)
- *Educators for Social Responsibility* catalog: <http://www.esrnational.org/>  
(Curricula, lessons and resources on topics including conflict resolution and social and emotional learning, character development and citizenship education.)
- [www.BowlingforColumbine.com](http://www.BowlingforColumbine.com) and [www.michaelmoore.com](http://www.michaelmoore.com)

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# MIKE'S ACTION GUIDE FOR STUDENTS

Democracy is not a spectator sport!

Get Involved! Click here <<http://www.michaelmoore.com/action/>> for the most recent action item from <<http://www.MichaelMoore.com/action/>>.

## TALK TO YOUR FRIENDS AND SCHOOLMATES ABOUT YOUR COUNTRY

Take the lead. Try to get them interested in a study group or book club or film discussion group. Organize your group and educate yourselves about the problems raised in *BOWLING FOR COLUMBINE*, using on-line resources. Some suggestions are:

- Why do so many people around the world hate us? How are they affected by U.S. foreign and military policy? How are they affected by the actions of U.S. global corporations?
- If we are so rich and strong as a nation, why is there so much fear in the United States? How is the U.S. media different from those in other nations?
- Is there a link between consumerism and fear?
- Why do we beat up on our poor?
- Why do we have so much gun violence? What make this nation different?
- What role does white racism play in the media, in the culture of fear, in U.S. foreign and military policy?

## MOVE YOUR GROUP FROM STUDY GROUP TO ACTION COMMITTEE.

Make some changes happen at your local level. Some examples are:

- Organize to write letters to the editor of your local newspaper.
- Organize to monitor—and complain publicly about—local tv news coverage.
- Organize a teach-in, campus debate or community forum.
- Organize to have your school offer a new course.
- Organize a local corporate watch project.
- Organize to educate the public through vigils, picketing or peace walks.
- Organize a letter writing campaign to your congresspersons.